



Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo

Revista Digital del Grupo de Estudios del Siglo XVIII

Universidad de Cádiz / ISSN: 2173-0687

nº 29 (2023)

LA INCONSTANCIA DE LA SUERTE (¿1700-1800?), HERODOTUS AND FORTUNE. NOTES ON AN ANONYMOUS *COMEDIA HISTÓRICA*¹

Giuseppe MARINO

(Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8255-3829>

Recibido: 25-11-22 / Revisado: 3-4-23

Aceptado: 3-4-23 / Publicado: 15-10-23

ABSTRACT: *La inconstancia de la suerte* (Biblioteca Nacional de España, mss. 16216) is a manuscript that has never been studied before, and its author and composition date remain unknown. It is a historical play that includes one of the most represented topics by dramatists during the Spanish Golden Age, that of *Fortuna bifrons*. Intending to teach a moral lesson, the author of this comedy intermingled his characters, both historical and imaginary, framing their life trajectories around having experienced prosperous then adverse fortune, and vice versa. This bilogy was generated from a well-known paradigm in our literature, first found in *The Histories* by Herodotus, namely the war between the king of Persia, Cyrus, and the king of Lydia, Croesus, and the famous dialogue between Solon, one of the seven sages of Greece, and the Lydian monarch on happiness and variability of luck. This study aims to shed light on this codex and its author, likely Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor (1737-1820), through a multidisciplinary perspective that encompasses ecdotic, historical, narrative and linguistic aspects in order to clarify its origin and place it correctly in the history of Spanish literature.

KEYWORDS: Instability, Fortune, Play, Croesus, Cyrus, Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor.

LA INCONSTANCIA DE LA SUERTE (¿1700-1800?), HERÓDOTO Y LA FORTUNA. NOTAS SOBRE UNA COMEDIA HISTÓRICA ANÓNIMA

RESUMEN: *La inconstancia de la suerte* (Biblioteca Nacional de España, mss. 16216) es un manuscrito inédito nunca estudiado cuyo autor y fecha de composición siguen siendo

¹ This research article has received funding from the Agencia Estatal de Investigación (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación) and the «Fondo Social Europeo» through the Programa de Ayudas Ramón y Cajal. (Referencia de la ayuda / AEI / 10.13039/501100011033)

desconocidos. Se trata de una comedia histórica que incluye uno de los tópicos más empleados por los dramaturgos del Siglo de Oro, el de la Fortuna *bifrons*. Con una intención didáctica, el autor de esta comedia entremezcló sus personajes, tanto históricos como imaginarios, enmarcando sus trayectorias vitales tras haberse servido de la fortuna antes próspera y luego adversa, y viceversa. Esta biografía se engendró a partir de un paradigma muy conocido en nuestra literatura y presente por primera vez en las *Historias* de Heródoto, a saber, la guerra entre el rey de Persia, Ciro I, y el de Lidia, Creso, y el famoso diálogo entre Solón, uno de los siete sabios de Grecia, con el monarca lidio acerca de la felicidad y la variabilidad de la suerte. Este estudio intenta arrojar luz sobre este códice y su autor, probablemente Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor (1737-1820), a través de una perspectiva multidisciplinar que engloba aspectos ecdóticos, históricos, narrativos y lingüísticos con el fin de aclarar su procedencia y colocarla correctamente en la historia de la literatura española.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Inconstancia, Fortuna, Comedia, Creso, Ciro, Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor.

IS ANTONIO VALLADARES THE ANONYMOUS AUTHOR OF *LA INCONSTANCIA DE LA SUERTE*?

Amongst those manuscripts produced in Spain between the 17th and 18th centuries which are held in the National Library of Spain (Biblioteca Nacional de España, BNE), *La inconstancia de la suerte* (ms. 16216), an anonymous play most likely written during the 18th century, is a codex that has never been studied before. It is believed that this play forms part of the *comedias* presented in the *corrales* (courtyard theatres) or in Spanish public theatres in the main cities, although no index or database of the Spanish theatre has ever mentioned *La inconstancia* before. The absence of a signature, the lack of bibliographical information, and the scarcity of any indication of a date limit any sort of deep speculation about the manuscript of *La inconstancia*. The only source of this work is mentioned in the *Catálogo de las piezas de teatro* [...]: «*Inconstancia (La) de la suerte; Creso y Ciro*. Comedia. E. Creso. Valerosos lidianes, cuyo aliento A. Perdonad sus muchos yerros. 75 hoj., 4.º, l. del s. XVIII» (Gayangos y Arce, 1899: 243). From 1809 to 1897 it is believed that the bibliographer Gayangos owned this manuscript after acquiring a part of a library in Armona, a small village in Spain. It is unknown when the codex of *La inconstancia* reached the Spanish scholar. After Gayangos' death, all prints and manuscripts in his possession were handed over to the Spanish Government in 1899 and added to the BNE's collection.

There is, however, one reliable indication that leads to a single name, a possible author of *La inconstancia*: the name «Valladar» appears on the cover of the codex. This nomenclature is also present in another manuscript held at the BNE, namely that of the dialogue of the *Perfecta señora* (ms. 17939), also anonymous. Nevertheless, in the case of *La inconstancia* a possible conjecture could be that the author was Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, a playwright who, according to the latest research, was born in Rianjo (Galicia) in 1737 and died in Madrid in 1820 (Herrera, 2005: 429-450). In *La inconstancia* the surname does not appear in its entirety («Valladar» instead of «Valladares») and, after a simple comparison of the calligraphy, there is no similarity between *La inconstancia* and the comedies of the prolific Galician playwright. Valladares was very active as a dramatist in the early 1780s, when the manuscript of *La inconstancia* was probably written. He stopped writing *comedias* in order to edit the *Semanario Erudito*, but the first issue of the paper was not published until the spring of 1787 (Herrera, 2005: 429-448).

Nonetheless, if one considers some of Valladares' works currently held in the BNE, his surname is not always written in a uniform way. Moreover, many of Valladares' manuscripts do not include his proper name and, most importantly, often the abbreviation «Valladar.» is used.² With this in mind, one of the most plausible explanations is that the copyist may have written his surname wrongly, or shortened it by using an abbreviated form. It should be noted, however, that certain names which relate to the same person within the manuscript are written differently and imply errors between the first and third *jornada* (e. g. Alicia or Alisia, Siro or Ciro, Mirafilia or Marfilia, Arfigio or Argilio, Eovares or Eobares). These names indicate an increased likelihood of error in the manuscript, and at the same time imply that the codex was not well written after all.

From a thematic point of view, it is interesting to see the relation to another play by Valladares named *Desdicha más dichosa* (ms. 16454) in which he writes about the subject of fortune, similar to *La inconstancia*, and also uses historical figures such as the King of Scotland, the Prince of Samaria and the Prince of Greece to argue the concept of fortune. So, we consider *La inconstancia* to be an historical play or *comedia histórica*, one of at least twenty that Valladares wrote. Speaking of themes and relationships between *La inconstancia* and his other works, we know that he worked on the same arguments and themes several times and this allowed him to recycle elements in his plays and novels.

There is similarity in the intention and argumentation between *La inconstancia* and other Spanish works published during the 18th century. *Descripción de la inconstancia de la fortuna*, for example, was translated and adapted from French by Palacio y Viana and contains a section titled «De Crespo, Rey de Lidia, y de Oeta, Rey de Colco» (Palacio y Viana, 1788: 20-34). *La inconstancia* is also the title of a poem by Lope de Vega with verses mentioning the prison of Croesus: «Vemos esclavo al Señor, / La sierra más alta, llana, / y más mudable el favor» (Mendíbil, 1819: 434). However, all this information does not provide enough insight into the authorship of *La inconstancia* but only confirms that, as argued below, historical characters and topics within this play were widely known in Spain during the Early Modern period and still exist in contemporary Spanish literature (for example, Croesus in *O'Donnell* or *Aita Tettauen* by Galdós).

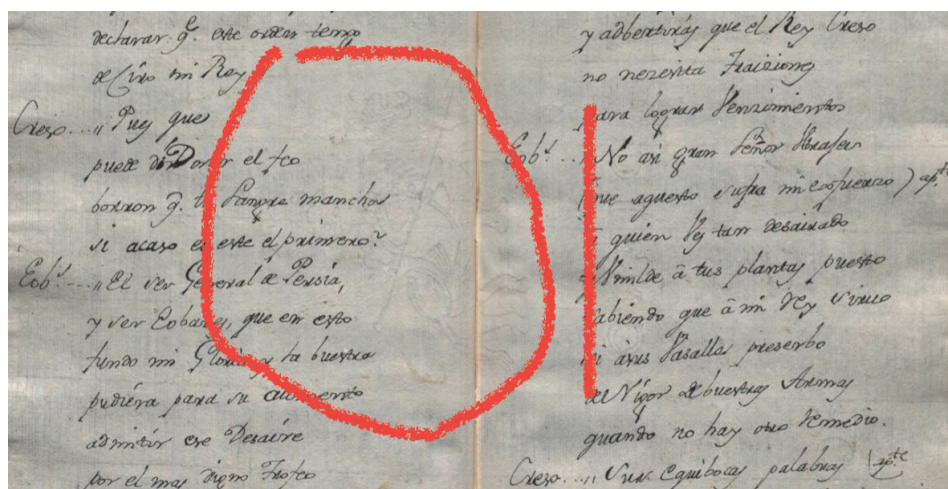
It is possible that *La inconstancia* may have been an *obra suelta* which was never presented on stage and thus may only have been known to its readers. This is not unusual for sources that were published and transcribed into manuscripts during the Early Modern period and onwards (Arellano, 1995: 61). Anyhow, the few corrections made within the manuscript imply it is copy-edited by one copyist single-handedly.

Determining the date of *La inconstancia* is very challenging. The manuscript does not indicate a year; however, an analysis of its handwriting, following the parameters suggested by the BNE, places it after 1701. Its 74 folios are kept in perfect condition, despite the fact that this play could even be dated before the publication date proposed by the BNE, strengthening the probability of this manuscript being a copy only. However, after studying the watermarks and different figurative drawings visible on the manuscript in more detail and using the new Corpus de Filigranas Hispánicas as reference,³ it is possible to suggest a more precise composition date. One image that happens to appear often throughout the pages is a bullfighter sitting on a horse with a lance in his hand and a hat, or similar, on his head. We can also see a bovine, most likely a bull. The image shows the man attacking the bull with his lance. The words «VIR» (often «VER») and

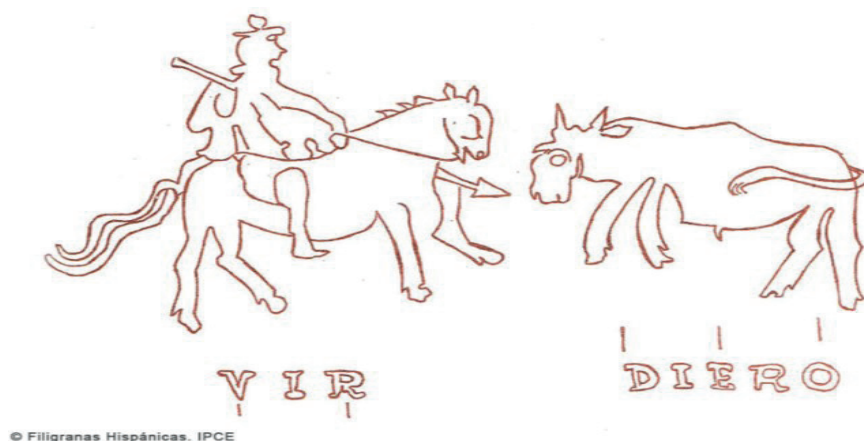
² Also see: *El culpado sin delito*, ms. 15905; *El castigo del avariento*, ms. 14523/8; *Aben Said, emperador del Mongol*, ms. 16194; *La cándida o amante precipitado*, ms. 15902; *Las bodas de Camacho*, ms. 15918; *La más altiva arrogancia postró unida España y Francia* [...], ms. 16474; *Las vivanderas*, ms. 15478; *La gratitud*, ms. 16453).

³ The Corpus de Filigranas Hispánicas is available at https://www.cultura.gob.es/filigranas/buscador_init.

«DIERO» always appear underneath the drawings. The Corpus de Filigranas Hispánicas indicates these watermarks originated from the Archive of the Kingdom of Galicia, and to be more precise, from the Ecclesiastical Private Collection in Santa María de Sobrado, issued in 1781. These findings suggest that the manuscript *La inconstancia* could belong to this period, although presumably not this exact year. This work's paper, however, most probably derived from the same paper mill as the ecclesiastical collection:



Source: *La inconstancia de la suerte*, ms. 16216, f. 7.



Source: *Corpus de Filigranas Hispánicas*. Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España (IPCE)

ON THE PARADIGM AND THE MYTH: CYRUS, CROESUS AND SOLON

Throughout Spanish literature, since the time of Alfonso X and his *General Estoria*, the legend of Croesus' wealth came to be adopted and explained through a saying that is still used in English: «rich as Croesus». This was a story that circulated parallel to the anecdote of King Midas, who turned everything he touched into gold (Fernández Galiano, 1961: 93-98; Sepúlveda, 2001: 513-526; Lida de Malkiel, 1949: vii-lxxi). Both represented two paradigms —as in most cases originating in Herodotus (I, 14-56)— a mixture of

myth and legend, about how wealth did not guarantee a happy life. Although Rodríguez Adrados claimed in his introduction to *The Histories* by Herodotus «en la Edad Media, el Renacimiento y el Barroco, en España y fuera de España, Heródoto fue poco conocido» (Heródoto, 1992: 66), Herodotus' presence is clearly proven in Spanish literature thanks to intermediate readings like anthologies, miscellanea and polyantheas, which divulged, albeit partially, *The Histories* (Marino, 2022). Although Herodotus was not translated to Spanish during the Golden Age, the presence of his writing, as Reichenberger claimed, would have become a part of classical European heritage in modern times (Reichenberger, 1965: 235-241).

According to Fernández Galiano, in Spain many modern authors manipulated various Herodotean *lógoi* from Lorenzo Valla's translation (1452-1457) of the *Histories*, especially the life and death of Cyrus and Croesus: one can start with Juan de Timoneda's *Patrañuelo*; or Lope de Vega's *Contra el valor no hay desdicha y el primero rey de Persia*; and José de Cañizares' *El anillo de Giges y el mágico rey de Lidia* (1676-1750). All these writers and many others partly followed *The Histories* by Herodotus, mostly to interpret Cyrus' childhood. Nevertheless, one very interesting work on the legend of Croesus and Cyrus is the Spanish translation of Pietro Metastasio's short book *Ciro riconosciuto*, which was premiered as an opera by the Italian musician Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) in Vienna on August 28, 1736, to celebrate the Saint of the Empress Elizabeth, the wife of Charles VI. Later, his book served as an inspiration to the playwright José Concha and his drama entitled *Ciro, príncipe de Persia* (18th century). In the play *El amante mudo* (ms. 16964), which is attributed to Sebastián de Villaviciosa (1618-1663), there are some traces of Herodotus' historical characters. Finally, there are some references to Cyrus and Croesus in the *Romancero general* and in different ballads by Juan de la Cueva (Durán, 1859: 331-334).

The author of *La inconstancia* reinterpreted one of the historical elements narrated in *The Histories*, namely the meeting between Solon and Croesus, a well-known moral paradigm and a literary archetype, as well as Croesus' wealth. The author of *La inconstancia* introduces ten *dramatis personae*, two magistrates and some soldiers who appear sporadically throughout the play. Following the Aristotelian criterion, each character acts according to the situation (during three *jornadas*), which is determined by their changing conditions and decisions. They are simple characters who represent a certain psychological simplicity which, like in Baroque theatre, support or counteract the triumph of the central idea that the author aims to emphasize, namely the mutability of fortune.

The famous encounter between the Sovereign (Croesus) and the Wise Man (Solon) is present in several classical sources, although one of the first and most adopted from a literary point of view arises from Herodotus' work (I, 95-217). The Greek historian used three different sources in order to reconstruct the history of Croesus —the first of the barbarians to subdue the Hellenes and force them to pay tribute— and King Cyrus (Fernández Galiano, 1962: 22-23). Besides Solon, Cyrus and Croesus are present in *La inconstancia*, i. e., Astyages, who is mentioned in other classical sources such as the *Cyropaedia* (vv. 353-366) by Xenophon. Furthermore, Justin recounted the life of Cyrus in his epitome of Trogus' expansive *Liber Historiarum Philippicarum* (Lib 1), although the presence of Croesus appeared on few occasions as an abridgement of *The Histories*. The author of *La inconstancia*, however, substantially altered the relationships between characters in order to focus their attention on the network of causes and typical effects of an action. A clear example is given between Herodotus' description of Astyages, son of Cyaxares, King of Media, who was subdued by Cyrus (I, 95-109), and, alternatively, the version in

La inconstancia in which the author reinterpreted this reference and placed Astyages as general of Croesus' troops.

Solon and Croesus embodied two antithetical models that confront *hybris* (excessive pride) and *sophrosyne*. Solon typifies temperance and the right balance, Croesus a barbarian monarchist representing the *libido dominandi* (the passion to command), along with otherness, greed, arrogance and presumption, and disproportion (Oliveira Ribeiro, 2011: 2). According to Croesus, only by fighting against Cyrus the Lydian King can he be the most powerful and obtain honour and fame. To some extent, his excessive revenge overwhelms all the moral demands of the monarch identified at any time:

CRESO. Valerosos lidianos, cuyo aliento
al Asia y Persia sirve de escarmiento
pues llamasteis de horrores,
al Asia y a la Persia de temores.
siendo con mudo espanto
retórica la voz de su quebranto;
ya a los muros de Pteria estáis cercanos
atalayáis del sol, émulos vanos
en cuyos torreones
he de fijar guerrero mis pendones
consiguiendo el ardor de mi prudencia
que venga Ciro a darme la obediencia,
pues no pienso lograr cumplida hazaña
mientras que no le venzo en la campaña;
y pues ya todo el Asia os vio triunfantes [...] (f. 2v).⁴

As it is well known, *The Histories* set forth the arrival at Sardis of the legislator Solon, who apparently travelled for ten years so that no one could modify the laws that he promulgated and established in Athens. The Greek sage was a guest at Croesus' palace in which the famous dialogue between the Lydian King and Solon about happiness (Keller, 1973: 136-141), the nucleus of *La inconstancia*, took place:

CRESO. Pues si acaso así imagina
contener el feliz vuelo
de mis glorias, mal presume
pues tiene contra su imperio
todo el poder de la Lidia
y felicidad de Creso
que, aunque Solón ha encontrado
sofísticos argumentos
con que aparentar variable
la suerte en mí que más esto
no es al caso (f. 9v).

⁴ All the quotes from the *La inconstancia* follow the page numbering of the manuscript digitized by the BNE, available at <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000216179&cpa=1>. According to Herodotus (1, 71-94), the city of Pteria supports a siege of about fifteen days and is surrendered with its king and its treasures. *La inconstancia* follows the historical thread of Herodotus, or at least the most significant details.

According to Leão (2000: 27-52), among existing old sources (Xenophon, Ctesias, Justin, etc.), there are two prevalent visions that aim to give a different approach to the encounter between Solon and Croesus. Except for Herodotus (1, 29-33), both Plutarch (*Moralia, On the Malice of Herodotus* [857f-859a]) as well as other authors suggest a succinct Herodotean synthesis of the famous conversation. Quite the opposite to the vision of the Greek historian, they placed more emphasis on the moral value that story purported to convey (Muñoz Gallarte, 2013: 1-18).

In the first place, *La inconstancia* rearranged the main focus of the Herodotean dialogue, which emphasized happiness and its limitations, in another topic, namely the changeability of fortune (Kapuściński, 2004: 97-105):

SOLÓN: [...]

Este motivo, esta causa,
me condujo adonde encuentra
segunda vez mi dolor
ilusa a vuestra grandeza
mira señor que la dicha
cuanto más altiva vuela
tanto mayor precipicio
en su elevación demuestra.
La fortuna se parece
al cristal que en luces bellas
es lisonja de los ojos
y aun leve golpe se quiebra (f. 23).

According to Herodotus' narration, the Lydian King asked the wise man if he had met a man happier than him, and Solon replied that the happiest man was the Athenian statesman Tellus (1, 30, 4-5). After some time, Croesus asked Solon the same question again and this time he replied the Argives Kleobis and Biton, who, according to Herodotus, were athletes with great physical strength who won several prizes (1, 31, 4-5). This time round, the second answer provoked anger in Croesus as Solon did not consider Croesus' wealth. Hence, his answer explains in this instance that during human existence everything was possible (1, 32, 2-4) and he was still unable to know if Croesus' life would end in a good way (1, 32, 5).

Returning to the comparison, according to *The Histories*, Croesus used to consult the Oracle and donate many offerings to the Olympian deity Apollo. In *La inconstancia* the author did not mention any oracle, as in Herodotus, but just foresight («pero me la pronostican / con favorables excesos» [ff. 44v-45]). Furthermore, Solon alluded to his astrology to have an endorsement of his forecast: «yo hallo en mi astrología [...] que habéis de quedar vencido» (f. 45). In the Herodotean *Histories*, Croesus asked Solon in order to know in which position he would place his *eimarménh*, i. e., his «destiny» and his happiness, essentially based on material goods of which he was always one of the greatest historical representatives. Through this dialogue Herodotus' main intention was to explain to Croesus that the rich man is not happier than the poor and that material goods are inconstant. The author of *La inconstancia* changed wealth and terrestrial commodities for a more generic term «luck», which included any kind of gain and, in particular, political power. Nonetheless, both in Herodotus' work, as well as in *La inconstancia*, Croesus' arrogance and insolence are being moralized, forcefully guiding him towards his perdition and defeat to atone for his personal guilt:

SOLÓN: [...]

No hay señor en esta vida
nada estable si contemplas
que el más soberbio edificio
y la más erguida almena
a un leve vaivén sepultan
con su orgullo su grandeza (f. 23).

Solon's personality synthesizes the moral component of the play since it tries to demonstrate that the contingency of human life is to be subject to the mutability of fortune. The Greek sage demonstrated that the *phthónos*, i. e., the envy of the gods, will fall on everything that threatens the natural limit of human actions and this will create a conflict between *hybris*, i. e., a «disproportion», and *phthónos*. The consequence is the misfortune of the offender, with Croesus being punished by Cyrus for having broken the peaceful balance of the story as a final distributive justice, for having attacked the honour of his neighbour. It is clear that the objective of *La inconstancia* is not to show opposition between the Greek and the Barbarian, as it happens in *The Histories* (Leão, 2000: 35, 38- 39), but to depict a tyrant who subdued many people and constantly emphasized his fortune and Gods' will:

CIRO: [...] ¿Fue otra cosa que un abuso
de dominar ultrajando
reyes, reinos y provincias
derechos, fueros y cuanto
el ímpetu de tu furia
se quiso oponer, llegando
tu ambición y tu soberbia
al extremo desgraciado
de imaginar propia duda
el dominio más extraño?
¿en qué os ofendió la Persia? (f. 55v).

Croesus paid for his «sins» and for the unpredictable consequences of his actions, for his proud blindness, and received the humiliation of the divine law: fortune. *La inconstancia* criticizes a notion of fortune, as in *The Histories*, established on materialistic wealth and supported by the reinterpretation of two historical characters in order to dwell on a moralizing controversy over fortune. Croesus and Solon eventually overcame the barriers of their historical existence narrated by Herodotus, and became a paradigm for the author of *La inconstancia*.

Timaeus (Atlantis) by Plato mentions the same account of events, but more concisely and with different nuances, according to successive sources taken from *The Histories*. However, Plato's text cannot be classified as a primary source of *La inconstancia*, simply because he portrays both Croesus and Solon as wise men, and Cyrus as a representation of power. Furthermore, Diogenes Laërtius, in *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (I, 50), did not deal so carefully with the encounter between Croesus and Solon. His narration is much more abbreviated and attests that this paradigm was already crystallized from Herodotus' *Histories*. In *Lives and Opinions*, Diogenes puts more emphasis on the formulation of Croesus' question directed to the Oracle (omitted in *La inconstancia*)

about whether he had to move his troops against the Persians (Narro Sánchez, 2013: 269-276) and, consequently, try to increase his wealth and territory.

According to Herodotus, the answer that moved Croesus to undertake the effort against Cyrus was ambivalent and ended, as it is well known, with the loss of the Lydian territories. Foremost Croesus asked the Oracle if his monarchy would last a long time, and the Pythia (commonly known as the Oracle of Delphi) replied that it would continue until a mule was the King of Lydia (1, 56, 1). In this response, the Oracle was using the word «mule» to refer to the foolishness of Croesus; however, Croesus believed the Oracle was referring to Cyrus (Sánchez Mañas, 47- 53). The Oracle had also announced that if Croesus attacked the Persian army, he would destroy «a great empire». And so, the Lydian monarch assumed the victim was going to be Cyrus since he did not ask Apollo which one would be the defeated empire (in 546 BC the Lydian army was subjugated). Croesus crossed the Halys river (today Kızılırmak) that separated the Persians' allied territories from the Lydian empire and he ended up losing his territories.

Croesus' capture is one of the crucial points of the play. In *La inconstancia*, the author omitted the construction of a pyre in order to immolate the Lydian King along with fourteen young Lydians. Instead, the play mentions the Persian Council's unanimous decision to punish Croesus. In *The Histories*, the imprisoned tyrant remembered Solon's speech, which he did not want to hear, that no living man is happy but only fortunate and, in disgrace, he named Solon three times. At the same time, Cyrus decided to absolve the Lydian King because he thought that the same thing would happen to him and because there was nothing safe among men. As a result, he ordered that the fire be extinguished. Following Herodotus' *Histories*, Croesus reached wisdom through his mistakes, suffering and recognizing the worth of Solon's words. This was the moral transformation narrated by Herodotus (1, 86) which the author of *La inconstancia* wanted to emphasize, especially regarding human fragility and the variability of fortune:

CRESO. Las que añaden nueva pena
al propio conocimiento.
Solón, ese grande sabio,
a quien los cielos me dieron
por testigo en mis victorias
y en mis arrojios pues freno
del engaño de mi dicha
me hizo infinitos recuerdos
sin que mi ardor belicoso
diese a su verdad ascenso (f. 74).

What is the true moral lesson *La inconstancia* intended to convey to its reader/spectator? If one considers that Solon was against luxury and wealth, or other paradigms of arrogance and hubris that the Greek sage wanted to dispense with, these *exempla* were valid for every human being. What this text intended to provide was undoubtedly a censure of arrogant behaviour, which can be applied to not only classical kings but also contemporary ones (of the era of *La inconstancia*) and, therefore, the playwright may have tried to inculcate this moral attitude with respect to material goods. It is clear that the author struggled to find a character that endured good fortune well instead of one that supported misfortune with integrity, since the first leads to arrogance while the other encourages prudence. The play praises wisdom as the essence that allowed a man, in this case Croesus, to understand and accept that his destiny was changing, unpredictable

and inconstant. Moderation, or the Aristotelian golden mean, was the only way to face adversity as good fortune.

Undoubtedly the ethical-pedagogical pattern and *leitmotiv* are the virtue which aims to positively affect the readers/listeners, who, by imitating Cyrus and following Solon's instructions, will consequently become good leaders or subordinates. *La inconstancia* proceeds towards an almost obligatory «happy ending» in which Croesus achieved his peace, despite experiencing a defeat, and reached satisfaction not only in the freedom granted by Cyrus but also in love:

CRESO. A vuestras heroicas plantas
de nuevo mi vida ofrezco
y ya que me dais la vida
que era vuestra de derecho
otra mejor os suplico
que me deis si lo merezco.

CIRO. Ya yo os he entendido Alicia.

ALICIA. Hermano y señor.

CIRO. Da luego
a Creso tu hermosa mano.

ALICIA. Mira.

CIRO. Que hay que deteneros
quien ha dado ya los brazos
no debe hacer extremos.

ALICIA. Lógrose el fin de mis ansias.

CRESO. Yo logro lo que apetezco (f. 75).

The prison engendered a didactic effect as a *kátharsis* of Croesus' arrogant passions as he advanced from happiness to misfortune and vice versa. The Lydian King is a tragic figure, not because of a radical evil, but by mistake. The same concept becomes more radical when «lo trasladamos desde un mundo griego a las ideas de responsabilidad moral propias de la civilización cristiana» (Carnero, 1994: 63) in which it was projected.

Somehow, the spectator is enveloped in a sense of compassion or mercy, while, at the same time, morally accepting the legality of the punishment that Cyrus, the true hero of the play, has given. Analogously to McGrady's statement in his edition of Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna* (1612-1614), the author of *La inconstancia* «respeto la historia en general [...], pero lo que más le importa no es la exactitud histórica, sino la verosimilitud dramática, y a este fin introducirá los cambios que le parezcan necesarios» (Vega Carpio, 1993: 11), incorporating data of the surrounding reality and placing the action in a present and making it plausible.

Cyrus and Croesus' encounter could perhaps have been understood by the educated public or people who were used to reading literature such as *The Histories*. McKendrick also recalls: «the audience included the cultured and learned. We should not be surprised therefore at the sophistication of what was written. Since a play is a combination of action, characters, and dialogue, of text, subtext and context, its meaning cannot be found in the plot and its ending alone» (McKendrick, 1989: 200). The use of subjects or topics without naming them was a way to appeal to the «convivencia de los lectores o a la de los espectadores, que se sentirían felices al reconocerlas y establece un acuerdo tácito entre el autor y el público, por la mayoría heterogéneo» (Egido, 2013: 250). It was a recognition mechanism, or «connotative semiotics» as Hjelmslev says, in that the audience's complicity

ity formed part of the theatrical work. The meaning of Croesus and Cyrus' myth, or of the dialogue between Solon and the Lydian King, was not isolated from the system to which the play belonged but was part of its interior. Its existence was symbolic and it was another ontological truth of the history that sustained it. It might be considered that between the myth of Cyrus and Croesus there was a certain distance that the receiver had to narrow. The reader/spectator gained knowledge of classic myths in a process that Lasagabáster called «recepción arqueológica de los mitos clásicos por parte de un receptor contemporáneo», or «transmitificación», which consists of an adaptation of the classic for the current spectator. In this process, there is a predilection for certain aspects that are tuned to the contemporary public, such as the problem of freedom or the mutability of fortune (Lasagabáster, 1988: 227, 229-239).

CLASSIFICATION HYPOTHESIS: A PROPOSAL

There is not enough information given in order to conjecture if *La inconstancia* hides some political interpretation and cryptic reference to some historical characters of that time of a simple transcript of current social events, or if one should consider it just as the exaltation of a virtuous and humble government. The fact is that its protagonist, Croesus, represents a decadent government, broken because of his passions, while Cyrus embodies the new monarchy endowed with other qualities such as patience, respect and virtue.

La inconstancia could be placed between the heroic *comedia* of the Golden Age and its descendants of the 18th century. Likewise, its author, following Vitse's proposal, should be included in the «segunda generación, más allá de Aristóteles», next to Salvador Jacinto Polo de Medina (1630), Jusepe Antonio González de Salas (1632), José Pellicer de Tovar (1630) or Francisco de Villar. In this generation, there was an inversion of the classical scheme of *delectar aprovechando* in *enseñar deleitando*, in which *docere* maintained an absolute priority, as well as the moral edification in the *comedia* (Vitse, 1988: 20). However, according to Hermenegildo, from the second half of the 16th century onward, some playwrights in Spain spread a new type of theatrical work conveying a fundamental problem, namely the bad government and the presence of the tyrant king whose interest was to destroy the court and civility. This type of theatrical work was not very successful and failed to establish the necessary contact with the spectators (Hermenegildo, 2002: 9).

Frequently, the real power was represented in two ways: one in which the monarch model had Cyrus' positive connotations being depicted as a divinity (e. g. *Fuente Ovejuna*, *El mejor mozo de España*, *La mayor virtud de un rey*); and the other was the abuse of power by the sovereign that «desarticula las bases de la convivencia política al imponer sus malévolos y sus personales locuras» (Hermenegildo, 2002: 13, 27) and thus puts the existence of the society at risk. The king proposes here an archetype of behaviour for his people to follow, such as the prioritization of moderation, pacifism, concerns over the kingdom and principles of coexistence and solidarity; all elements that the tyrant himself lacks. In many *comedias*, including *La Inconstancia*, destiny or luck turns out to be the crystallization of social norms, and the rejection of these lead the tyrant (in this instance, Croesus) to a moderate catastrophe. His failure is the result of respecting the rules, the fear of losing himself, and his desire for victory or wealth. Only love, a variable reality, saves him from his final disaster. Everything depended on a *fatum*, which in *La Inconstancia* is the notion of fortune that becomes a theatrical staging.

As in *La virtud coronada* (1742), a historical play by Luzán, *La inconstancia* persisted with the Golden Age features and survived classic and mythological semi-direct but universal motifs (Arellano, 1992: 189-215). These features were veiled since «no hay mención

explícita del autor clásico [in this case, Herodotus], mientras que, lo que sí se menciona son algunos elementos clásicos (personas, lugares, circunstancias históricas)» (Tomc, 2016: 243-258). According to Bances Candamo's classification in *Theatro de los teatros* (1689-1690), *La inconstancia* could be placed between the *historiales*, whose argument was «un suceso de una batalla», as between those of «fábrica» since «sus personajes son reyes, príncipes, [...] su artificio consiste en varios acasos de la Fortuna, largas peregrinaciones, duelos de gran fama» (Bances Candamo, 1970: 35). However, for its didactic exemplariness, *La inconstancia* is undoubtedly a historical play in which poetry «enmienda a la Historia», as Candamo states, because history «nos expone los sucesos de la vida como son; la comedia nos los exorna como debían ser, añadiéndole a la verdad de la experiencia mucha más perfección para la enseñanza» (1970: 82).

As a teacher of life, the author uses history as an active witness of the work to create dramatic tension. This anonymous author intends to re-establish the human behaviour patterns, seeks the virtuous aspect of the characters and highlights «cómo estas convenciones artísticas logran simbolizar significativamente la organización jerárquica de la sociedad *imitada* y sus interrelaciones armónicas o disarmónicas» (Vitse, 1990: 513). The relations between Cyrus and Croesus could work as another binomial, that is, father and son, through narrative combinations and within a dramatic societal binary ordered between lords and vassals. This statement could also be applied to *La inconstancia* in which, on the other hand, the author found an ideal discrete solution to educate the upper class without disrespecting it, i. e., «adoctrinar desde una actitud de superioridad que sería irrespetuosa» (Arellano, 1998: 13), but exposing his teachings, «diciendo sin decir» (Arellano, 2012: 104-105).

For all these characteristics *La inconstancia* is closer to the neoclassical era. As Rull comments on the theatre of the 1750s, it was all about:

[...] una mera continuación barroca, una especie de post-barroquismo teatral con todos los inconvenientes de prolongar una estética y unos sistemas literarios que ya no ejercían una función creadora sino imitadora de unos modelos, con el amañamiento subsiguiente y los visibles rasgos de decadencia bien presentes en dos formas o hechos de entender la práctica teatral: la imitación y la refundición (Rull, 1987: 60).

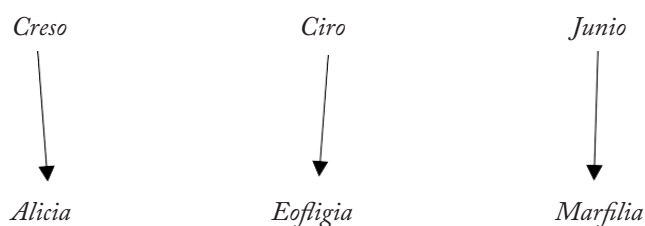
As is well known, «los neoclásicos creyeron que su época estaba llamada a realizar, entre otras, una reforma de los usos y comportamientos sociales, y a configurar un nuevo tipo de ciudadano más solidario, más cívico y más feliz» (Carnero, 1994: 39-44). Along with this argument, a play like *La inconstancia* allowed an internalization of the message and achieved an identification of the spectator (this could be any character type). Whoever read or watched *La inconstancia* had to consider the consequences of certain attitudes against the social order and ethical principles, through «interpretación generalizadora y paradigmática de acuerdo con los principios y comportamientos de la naturaleza en su integridad», without representations of death or visible scenes of violence (Carnero, 1994: 46).

On the other hand, all the characters that come into view in *La inconstancia* are «un haz de funciones» (Arellano, 1995: 115). They do not pretend to mimetically represent the reality but recognize their relationship with others first and, second, with the mental generalizations of the work's recipients, through a combination of the historical or the real moment, and the possible and the plausible. Thus, neoclassical *comedia* rules could influence *La inconstancia's* configuration and structure, firstly because of its spatial-temporal

features which did not correspond to the spectator, who in turn imaginatively recreated the dramatic situation. Secondly, the tragic hero (Croesus) must have belonged to the upper class, in this case, a monarch, surrounded by «veneración e interés, y que sus destinos mueven a todos porque afectan a las naciones o comunidades por ellos regidas» (Carnero, 1994: 48, 56-57).

LOVE AND RELATIONS: A SUBPLOT TO THE BATTLE

One of the most interesting features of *La inconstancia* is the love subplot which led to an episodic structure. Besides generating suspense, it is used to «stress the moral lesson, which actually structures the play» (Ruggerio, 1973: 173-191). It represents Terence's great contribution to ancient dramatic technique, adopted to maintain the suspense until the end of the play, that carefully and almost silently structures *La inconstancia* and, at the same time, unifies tradition (love) with history. The subplot is two couples' intriguing love stories, which are unified with the central plot. At the same time, they create a secondary action to the Croesus and Cyrus battle. The intrigue is a unique feature created by the author despite being a common element, and it is an important addition to the basis of the story. With regards to the theme of love in *La inconstancia*, one could argue that it could be reduced to three sentimental relationships as the following scheme demonstrates:



Source: Author's elaboration

The simplicity of this framework is equivalent to the treatment of love in *La inconstancia*, which is created following the very first eye contact between the corresponding partners. The word «amor» is repeated only three times in the entire work and the verb «enamorar» only twice. The first couple (Croesus and Alicia) stands out from the other two couples, which in turn serves as contrast. Croesus' love for Alicia is that of passionate feeling: «Loco me tiene mi amor» (f. 43v). In the play, and by analysing this couple further, love is not solely a union but also salvation. It is an irrepressible force that compels Croesus' main enemy and Alicia's brother (Cyrus) to accept this relationship. There are not many direct allusions in the play to falling in love and love itself; however, there are references to the previous step, that is, the movements and creations of this feeling.

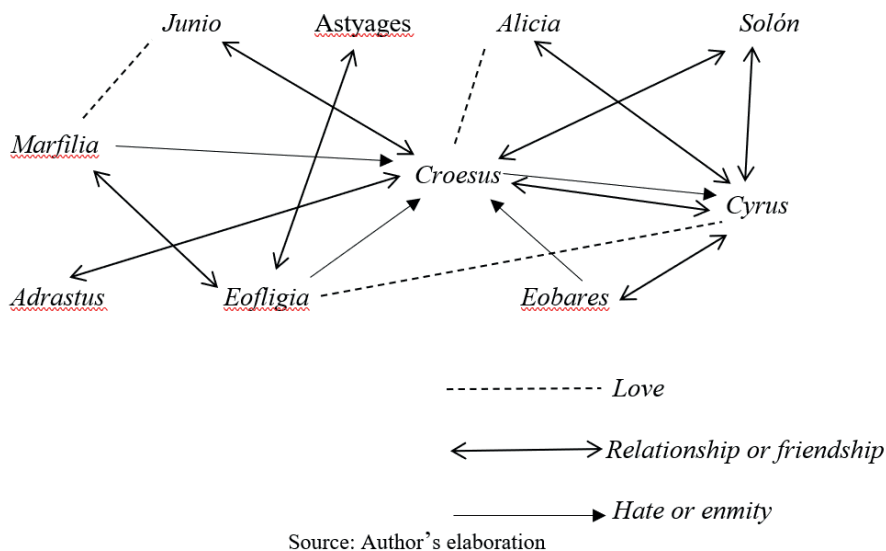
With regards to the second couple, love arises after a changing of clothes between Alicia (the princess) and Eofligia (Astyages' sister, disguised as a soldier), and her love confession to Cyrus. Eofligia reveals: «me puse la ropa misma / de la princesa» (f. 67v). Hence, the consequence is Cyrus' infatuation and subsequently his decision to marry her (f. 67v). The love between the first couple (Croesus and Alicia) engenders a bond of friendship and closeness between sovereigns since their relationship fully respects social rank and noble blood. Princess Alicia is the prototype of a woman who, despite following

her impulse, maintains her character's integrity. On the other hand, Eofligia reflects the hero (Cyrus) with her chaste love and education.

It is also worth considering the third couple, Junio and Marfilia. The language becomes relatively more ironic and leads the reader/audience to another linguistic level, that of the funny person, «el gracioso», with humorous witticisms. Although the comic element appears in very few scenes, the author incorporates humour with this couple. Despite the seriousness of the high-nobility characters, Junio and Marfilia give *La inconstancia* a more normal, happy ending.

The love that arises among these couples is exemplary and marked by a certain legality of possible conditions, i. e., it is never impossible despite the initial enmity that ends in conciliation between the two kingdoms. It is a love that shows a sudden appearance in the conditions in which it is born and, at the same time, it is more humanistic because of the lack of sensuality and, therefore, more linked to a certain appreciation of beauty.

The scheme of general relations is undoubtedly more complex:



Almost all the characters in the play are grouped in pairs and generate binary correlations which, in the end, serve to favour or oppose the final triumph of Cyrus. This is a *lieto fine*, a very common feature in many Spanish Golden Age *comedias*, for which a theoretical source is Cinthio Giraldi's work on Italian Renaissance (Horne, 1962: 28, 36-39). When focusing on the political plot, there is a clear opposition between Cyrus and Croesus, Adrastus and Eobares, and Solon and Croesus. Parallel to the love plot analysed previously, these groups are created according to similarities or moral qualities as well as criteria of oppositions based on harmony or discord. Croesus is the reference point in *La inconstancia* around which relationships with others are defined (see scheme above). Two groups exist, that are not dominated by passion: Cyrus, Solon and Eobares; and the second, more impulsive, group consisting of Croesus, Alicia and Junio.

To reaffirm, the sentimental topic is only a component of service to the central plot that is fortune, which, in turn, coincides with the didactic-politic intention. In *La inconstancia* there is no single action but two parallel activities. The first and foremost focuses on the importance of fortune's mutability and different political ideologies. The second

is complementary and is the love topic which, through a series of episodes, complicates the plot, but brings it closer to the public. Action is the true impulse of *La inconstancia*'s characters since it allows them to fall in love, to hate, to enter into war, to make important decisions, to moralize, to suffer and to learn the lesson.

FROM HISTORY TO THEATRE: A COMPARISON TO *LA VIRTUD CORONADA*

As Castro recalled at the beginning of the 20th century, the relationship between history and poetry acquired a particular acuity from the second half of the 16th century and, especially, among Italian writers. The notion of *moralité*, which survived until the 18th century (Valbuena Prat, 1969: 400), was censoring many more imaginative literary genres and preferring others which served as *exempla* (Damiani, 1987). The theatre tried to apply a certain «presión de un sistema de poder, y, por consiguiente, una estratificación y jerarquía de grupo» and contributed «a socializar un sistema de convenciones, sobre las cuales en ese momento se estimó había de verse apoyado el orden social concreto vigente del país, orden que había que conservar» (Maravall, 1972: 29-32). The pursuit of «verdad posible», of the real facts or the credible, simply became the «paradigma del deber ser, de lo ejemplarmente moral» (Castro, 1925: 29), since, as Rull states, «los neoclásicos estimaban como verosímil, no la verdad, sino lo que debía ser conveniente» (1987: III).

The author of *La inconstancia* was aware that history was an instrument or pretext rather than a purpose, while it provides facts and arguments that reinforced the verisimilitude. This did not prevent the use of creative essence and its application to the prevalently historical backbone of the play. Appealing to Oriental history, as occurred in *La inconstancia*, has systematically been sought in the Spanish *comedia* from the time of Juan de la Cueva (1543-1610) (Díez Borque, 1990: 99-100), although it never became as important as it was in French and Elizabethan theatre.⁵ According to Aubrun, from the beginning of the reign of Philip IV, there was an intensification of history in the theatre. It seems the *comedia* began to take a new path that was against the powerful men, facing them off against the topic of fortune from the moment the Count-Duke of Olivares was publicly discussed. Starting with an abolition of the «historical self», the playwright's aim was to «integrar el pasado ficticio, próximo o lejano de los personajes, en el presente vivido de los espectadores» without isolating the literary element from the historical part that comes up to an encomiastic purpose (Aubrun, 1981: 35-41, 107-108, 247). Luzán, discussing the meaning of the tragedy in his work *Poética* (1737), almost summarizes the skeleton of *La inconstancia*:

[...] la tragedia representación dramática de una gran mudanza de fortuna acaecida a reyes, príncipes y personajes de gran calidad y dignidad, cuyas caídas, muertes, desprecios y peligros exciten terror y compasión en los ánimos del auditorio, y los curen y purguen de estas y otras pasiones, sirviendo de ejemplo y escarmiento a todos, pero especialmente a los reyes y a las personas de mayor autoridad y poder (Luzán, 1737: 267).

The historical manipulation is necessary to praise heroes such as Cyrus and Solon, to save Croesus through love and forgiveness —here the Christian influence is evident— and to achieve a pseudo-tragic effect according to the principles of «moral» verisimilitude.

⁵ See also *El gran duque de Moscovia* by Lope de Vega; *El mariscal de Virón* by Montalbán; *La hija del aire* o *Semíramis* by Calderón.

Cyrus' decision to free Croesus, the friendship between the two men, and Cyrus' acceptance of Croesus' love for the princess, his sister Alicia, are important switches, both exceptional and arbitrary. It solely results in the piety of Cyrus and not in a juridical conclusion, and in what turned the monarch into a *Deus ex machina*.

According to Wood, «Herodotean history does not proceed in a straight line: the essence of history is the cycle of human affairs (1, 207), specifically the instability of human fortune...» (Wood, 1972: 25, 30). In addition, Herodotean characters are extremely easily moulded to fit the plays, as Beltrametti has shown in her recent research. The personalities in *The Histories*, contemporaries of both Aeschylus' and Sophocles' tragedies, were destined to mediate the history to an audience educated for theatre. In both *The Histories* and *La inconstancia*, characters interweave symbols that interpreted reality and transform these according to the norms of public culture and expectations. Both theatrical and historical characters, thanks to their verisimilitude, seduce readers/spectators using the mimesis of the forms of the most important metaphors to convey the values of history and narration, and speech and narration. Through their identity, they generate ethics and their truths as people, due firstly to the history and successively to their semantics and lexicon (Beltrametti, 1986: 171).

Herodotus' work is stated as «didáctica y moralizadora en que se destacan las relaciones de los griegos con los pueblos del Asia Menor y se reiteran las ideas de que la gloria y la grandeza son perecederas y que toda injusticia y arrogancia son castigadas por los dioses de forma implacable» (Luzán, 1995: 26). On the other hand, *La inconstancia* emphasizes the principle of moderation, or even an «equilibrium law» called fortune, whose responsibility is attributed as much to the gods as to fate (*el azar*), to unfair actions of men and their excessive greatness.

The author of *La inconstancia* does not go back to the characters' ancestors as does Herodotus, whose structural and unique lexical unit is that of war. The Spanish author subdued historical matter to his imaginative version enriched by a moral and ethical idealism that surpasses realism or historical pseudo-realism. In this play there is no chronological historical discourse, but it refers to a specific moment in the Herodotean *Histories* via an assertive discourse. The playwright did not submit the evolution of the facts of the law of gods, as in Herodotus' work, neither did he submit a *historia rerum gestarum* of the characters but an expurgation, a «poetic mutation» which was fabricated.

In the narration, both the historian and the playwright used a dechronologization of the historical timeline in which both were absent in order to endow the text with more objectivity and credibility. However, Herodotus' historical discourse presents a «nivel inmanente a la manera enunciada», i. e., «retiene todo el sentido que el historiador concede voluntariamente a los hechos que relaciona» (Vitse, 1990: 168, 173, 212). Inversely, *La inconstancia* purified the historical facts and also their characters and actions, to exalt the correct behaviour of the ruling lineage.

La inconstancia was not the only theatrical work that manipulated the historical sources by Herodotus or Justin. One of the most famous plays is *Contra valor no hay desdicha* by Lope de Vega in which he presents the mythological events, «the most historically unreliable and the closest to legend», on the birth and achievements of Cyrus, also the central axis of *La inconstancia* (Walker, 2014: 225-241).

Almost all the same characters are in another historical and pedagogical play: *La virtud coronada* by Luzán (1741 or 1742). It is a *comedia* that focuses on the importance of virtue, the objective of Cyrus' behaviour, the real hero of this work, whose triumphs, explained by his servant Bretón and his antagonist Astyages, are also stated in *La inconstancia*. Astyages decided to kill Cyrus due to a certain fear of his achievements, following

Asebandro's Machiavellian advice. There are two other parallelisms between *La virtud coronada* and *La inconstancia*: the first is a love subplot that deals with the contrast between the virtuous and the passionate; the second is the location, Cyrus' prison, i. e., exactly the opposite of *La inconstancia* in which Croesus was the prisoner, not the Persian King. Both *comedias* end with two weddings; in the play by Luzán the wedding is between Fenisa and Cyrus; and in *La inconstancia* it is between Cyrus and Eofligia, as well as Croesus and Alicia.

In *La inconstancia* the anonymous author established antithetical relationships between the protagonists by motives that were repeated and turned out to be polar opposites in terms of the respective thoughts and behaviours. In *La virtud coronada*, Luzán wants to show a Christian prince, that is, the impeccable Cyrus, who «encarnara los ideales humanísticos del Renacimiento y desplazara los malos ejemplos barrocos», who «posee la cara positiva del autodomínio de la *virtù* renacentista y es capaz de controlar cualquier impulso de rebeldía» and «obedece a un fin político-moral muy concreto» (Arellano, 1992: 199). For these reasons, and despite belonging to two different works, both characters of Cyrus are «vehículos para mostrar una composición moral bastante esquemática» (Arellano, 1992: 201). They are benefactors, enlightened rulers. On the contrary, Astyages in *La virtud coronada* and Croesus in *La inconstancia* are two despots, tyrants and negative figures that justify Cyrus' presence.

Finally, even in *La virtud coronada* there is a sketch that is reminiscent of *La inconstancia*: «Ciro, igual siempre y fuerte, / Adversa sea o próspera su suerte, / no conoce temor» (vv. 3.155 y ss.).

Both works argue the validity of the monarchical system but also its legitimacy, since «el principio de autoridad proviene del cielo y por ello es necesario sufrir al rey tirano» (Luzán, 1995: 41-42). The didactic-doctrinal constitution of «privanza» *comedias*, such as *La inconstancia*, goes beyond the Catholic moral value and includes a didacticism that could be defined as «political», whose purpose is to guide the public and the kings (Wilson and Moir, 1974: 139). In both cases Cyrus' portrait corresponds to the model of the perfect monarch «semejante al que pintan los tratados políticos y educativos del XVII, el cual coincide en muchos rasgos con el modelo de rey preconizado en el XVIII» (Arellano, 1992: 201) for whom prudence and humility are the basis of his nature. In order to demonstrate the teaching message of his work and advance with his didactical purpose, the author of *La inconstancia* needs to create a central and antagonistic character and be able to reverse his pejorative features to demonstrate a perfect education and moral. For this reason, the author remodelled Croesus, a very proud and haughty king, an irreverent figure capable of provoking negative reactions in the public, as an imperfect sovereign.

One of society's main concerns since the 16th century is the fear that human beings may degenerate into disorder. The re-establishment of order accentuates that the *comedia* «puede considerarse como un acto ritual que refuerza las creencias básicas de la sociedad» (Varey, 1987: 12).

FORTUNE IN *LA INCONSTANCIA DE LA SUERTE*

Whereas in the 15th and 16th centuries, the theme of fortune was employed to support the affirmation of a theological and providential principle of universal order—considering «las obvias paradojas e injusticias que ofrece la vida, la llamada próspera y adversa fortuna» (Díaz Jimeno, 1987: 186)—the 17th century marked a change in these considerations. Fate and fortune ceased to be interpreted as causes and became «en términos meramente descriptivos de los efectos de situaciones en que el hombre puede participar,

encauzándolas con el poder de su intelecto y de sus acciones dictadas por la razón y por la prudencia» (Díaz Jimeno, 1987: 187). In the Spanish language, the word «*fortuna*», compared to the word in Latin and other languages, is perhaps one of the few terms that also carries the whole aspect of its signification in relation to its effects: «*próspera*» and «*adversa*», «*dicha*» and «*desdicha*», «*ventura*» and «*desventura*» which usually means all good and bad events. Mendoza Negrillo recognizes three paths by which the theme of fortune arrives in Spain: «la vía popular, la vía literaria, la vía eclesiástica» (Mendoza Negrillo, 1973: 49). In the first path he identifies a survival of more or less pagan subjects, such as the beginning of evil and temporary goods and an Arabian and Jewish influence which introduced many superstitions around this argument in Spain. The second path introduces issues such as the problem of evil and divine providence, and the third one proposes many reflections on pain, evil and disgrace/misfortune.

The Histories, the main source of *La inconstancia*, connects fortune and *moirai* with fate and the supernatural, whose essential pattern is to punish. Herodotus's fortune is not only directed to the past but also to the future and to its readers/spectators, to the human's *nomoi*. According to Harrison, «*The Histories*, it seems, are founded on the principle of the instability of human fortune» and «every demonstration of the rule of the mutability of fortune [...] is also, moreover, an illustration of the force of the divine to disturb human affairs» (Harrison, 2000: 62-63).

The condition or the epithets of duplicity that often guide fortune are many (from Latin: «*incierta*», «*fallace*», «*incostans*», «*instabilis*», «*mobilis*», «*volubilis*», «*altera*», «*alterna*», «*alterutra*», «*ambigua*», «*utra*», «*utraque*»). However, the binary status «*prosperous*» and «*adversa*» is essential for this research: two «heads» whose negative feature sometimes has more relevance and use in literary works (e. g., *La fortuna adversa del infante don Fernando de Portugal* attributed to Lope de Vega and Francisco Agustín Tárrega). In *La inconstancia* the word «*hado*» is also present: «que los hados permitieron» (f. 55); «vencer el rigor el hado» (f. 57v); «¡oh hado funesto!» (f. 69). In this case, the term «*fate*» is closer to the Stoical vision (but also Platonist and Neoplatonic) that used this word to claim a certain fatality of the facts that occurred. Therefore, *La inconstancia*'s fortune or fate is not only a mutation from a condition of poverty to a status of wealth but also an evolution of fatality, an effect due to an irrational motive.

Calderón adapts the concept of fate or *eimarménh* —also present in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Republic*— to theatrical works as a law of human nature, a cosmic theory according to which the soul is free to choose its body and this choice is under the auspices of a star that in turn determines the inclinations and passions of the human future. These inclinations could be interpreted using the star system, a method adopted by Solon in *La inconstancia*. However, what is important to note is that these inclinations that apply to humans can be directed, in an inner struggle. Fate's vision as a «*fuerza que rige esos instintos e inclinaciones que pueden dominar la acción humana [...] y conducen a la catástrofe*» (Mendoza Negrillo, 1973: 53) is present in both Calderón's work and *La inconstancia*.

Fortune and its changeability, its uncertainty and variability, according to Maravall, is the Baroque answer to «los ejemplos anormales de ascensión y descenso vertiginosos en la posición social de un individuo, un gran tema de la comedia como de toda la literatura española» (Maravall, 1972: 57-58). One of the designations that the Latin language gave fortune was «*volubilis*», i. e., «*changeable, inconstant*», hinting at its most important characteristics, namely «*la inseguridad de los bienes temporales otorgados a los hombres*» (Mendoza Negrillo, 1973: 212).

Studies on fortune have multiplied during the last decades and, in spite of the cataloguing attempt by Gutiérrez (who rescued up to 30 titles that circulated until 1630),

La inconstancia was not mentioned in any study. The motif of fortune in the theatre was often related to that of honour and love, although there was a lack of objectivity by some scholars who did not consider the attention and concern of many Spanish playwrights regarding the theme of fortune. The synonyms of fortune such as «hado», «dicha», «ventura», «suerte» and «acaso» appear in *La inconstancia* in the guise of coincidence. Hence, what is relevant here is how the central characters resist certain attacks of fortune, trusting their own virtue and the universal justice of destiny.

The word «suerte» appears in the title of this play in order to awaken greater curiosity, a method that was used in more than a hundred works in Golden Age theatre. Fortune in *La inconstancia* is therefore not just a starting point, as there is no clue that connects it with divine providence, but with the dramatization of good and bad events, prosperity and adversity. It is an incessant movement that unifies all the events of this *comedia*. It may not be wrong to claim that God is an idea in *La inconstancia*, perhaps, a logical conclusion or, better yet, an old relic of the past. Fortune is the «*magistra vitae*, auténtica o recreada» which reinforces the didactic intention (Casa, 2002: 148-149). *La inconstancia*'s playwright tries to awaken a certain disdain in the heart of his reader/spectator for the vanity of honour and the fugacity of wealth. It also moves the reader towards a Stoic conception of the contempt of fortune. Owing to its intrinsic characteristic, the vision of fortune is very similar to reality due to its mobile and versatile, but also deceptive and cruel, essence.

For historical and chronological reasons, there is no link between *La inconstancia* and the famous Álvaro de Luna, emblem of fortune, although this play fits with the «falling prince» topic. In *La inconstancia*, Croesus is not the tragic hero of Golden Age theatre. In this case, he is used as in Herodotus' work (Wood, 1972: 22) in order to describe fatality in a context of his personal tragedy, i. e., a victim who suffers a calamity for his mistake (Hesse, 1977: 162). The playwright adopts the traditional scheme of prosperous and adverse fortune and more precisely a «prosperous-adverse-prosperous» framework.

Cyrus and Croesus embody an aspect of fortune that is moving into positions, a famous formula called *suerte trocada*. Everyone participates in the same ethical vision in which human beings are exposed to the changes of fortune and are defenceless against the action of fortune (Casa, 2002: 159). In his study, Gutiérrez sums up two types of fortune included in dramatic works. One is the «disfraz de la casualidad casi siempre «forzada» arbitrariamente por el dramaturgo en beneficio de las situaciones dramáticas» (Mendoza Negrillo, 1973: 3). The second, which is the one that most reflects the vision of *La inconstancia*, «sirve para enmarcar la trayectoria vital de uno o más personajes, generalmente, históricos» (Mendoza Negrillo, 1973: 4). For 25 years during the 17th century Spanish playwrights used the so-called *diosa de la Fortuna*, following the model of the first Roman literature, applied to historical figures with a moralizing intention. One of the essential features of *La inconstancia* is that there is no Christianization of fortune, as it occurs for example in *No hay más fortuna que Dios* by Calderón. Contrarily, there is a fugacity of the fortune in its most pagan aspect and not the concept of divine providence. *La inconstancia* accepts fortune as an explanation of the suffering of the righteous and happiness of the villains without asking for God's providence.

As Gutiérrez studied, the theme of fortune in Early Modern theatre was applied by Spanish tragedians who had a pessimistic conception of this argument, and it continued to be applied until the next generation of playwright successors such as Calderón (e. g. in *La gran Cenobia*, *Saber del mal y del bien* and *autos sacramentales*). Each one dealt with a specific feature of fortune (1975: 62). It can be deduced that in *La inconstancia* there is a concept of fortune not only as a negative but also as an entity «de suma inestabilidad, en

lo que no se puede confiar», expressed through ideas for the intention to moralize (Hermenegildo, 1961: 547-549). In *La inconstancia*, fortune is an independent and subversive concept. It seems to be a rhetorical hyperbole which designates the misfortunes that will happen to the characters through malice or through their own negligence.

Although the author of *La inconstancia* did not adopt the «wheel of fortune» metaphor, this play synthesizes both aspects related to this image, reflected by both the Lydian and Persian King:

[...] en lo alto de la rueda, está el rey sentado en su trono; es la posición de regno en la iconografía tradicional y corresponde a la Fortuna próspera; mientras que el rey destronado yace en la parte inferior de la rueda, es la posición de sum sine regno y denota la Fortuna adversa [...] (Gutiérrez, 1975: 66).

Croesus certainly occupies the centre of both parts of the work in which the author illustrates his ascension and fall respectively. His misfortune, or better, his fall, is symbolized as Solon's advice. Advice Croesus did not want to listen to.

When Croesus was imprisoned, Cyrus presented himself as an example of adverse fortune. Both kings, and in particular Croesus, not only exemplify the changes of fortune but at the same time embody two entirely different positions before life and events. Each step up, each new wealth, favour or title received by Croesus, is accompanied by a comment that recalls the imminence of his fall. It is the technique that Gutiérrez calls «contrapunto», which fits with the didactic intention of the *comedia* (Gutiérrez, 132). Cyrus' philosophy and behaviour are totally opposite and presuppose an orientation to a future where good triumphs over tyranny. It is a scale of transcendent values, an illustration of how the author mixes the received schemes and transforms these. By presenting Croesus as the hated sovereign, devoured by his ambitions, the figure of Cyrus becomes gigantic and fortune's mobility acquires heroic dimensions.

Why does the author of *La inconstancia* use the theme of fortune? The curiosity of the audience was surely also a main interest and concern to the dramatist. Nevertheless, according to Castro, this theme goes hand in hand with:

[...] pesimismo y la melancolía, con la sátira y otras manifestaciones reveladoras de la misma actitud de incertidumbre y descontento que existen al final de la Edad Media, como síntoma de que el orden antiguo se ha resquebrajado y se intenta la búsqueda de otro principio (Castro, 1929: 66-68).

It is also possible that, along with melancholy and pessimism, the playwright's choice of this theme was a protest against the political-social situation in which he lived. By using the lesson of *desengaño*, he demonstrated the variability of vanity and human glory, even among the most powerful people, and how one needs to do and act well in order to receive the best remedy to overcome certain deceptions in life (Gutiérrez, 1975: 230). Croesus' uncontrolled human power is subordinated to another higher power that also accounts for a stronger destruction, which may well be fortune. *La inconstancia's* playwright applies a well-known formula used by both moralists and historians to demonstrate its doctrinal purpose, elevating the patterns of his main characters, Croesus and Cyrus, to a universal reflection and presenting it to the private reader/spectator as an ideal model for all virtues, where the sways and changes of fortune are part of the theatre of life.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the 18th century an ideological theatre was established to replace another with Baroque roots, spectacular and far from the purposes of the enlightened. The *comedia* has been used as a propaganda weapon at the service of an idea of a social function that nobility should observe. The new dramatic ideas were undoubtedly the simplest educators and less fun and less spectacular than those of the Baroque era, and followed more rational rules. In this century *La inconstancia* should appear as a hybrid work that includes elements of Baroque dramaturgy and, at the same time, a purpose and style closer to the new trends of the 18th century.

The author used a didactic-moralizing purpose put in service of a higher political aim that did not lose sight of the changeability of the fortune which subordinates the characters of the play, although he adopted and disguised it with a love plot. Therefore, the structure found in *La inconstancia* did not separate itself from Baroque drama since the author did not renounce the inclusion of sets typical of heroic *comedia* and a couple of *graciosos* of the popular drama genre (Juno and Marfilia). The psychological conflict, as well as the entanglement, is developed in a fast and minimal way, making decisions and falling in love more suddenly and unexpectedly.

On the other hand, the ideology in *La inconstancia* is undoubtedly the moderation and the confidence of an order presided over by a God-fortune and laws that reward the virtuous, punish the guilty and present some Stoic (or better Neo-Stoic) features. The playwright created this *comedia* as an educational vehicle rather than a recreational activity, because, as Díez Borque recalls:

[...] el teatro no es ya un hecho esporádico en la vida social, sino un hecho cultural reglamentado económicamente, sometido a la ley de la oferta y la demanda y con importantes posibilidades de ser utilizado para fines no estrictamente «culturales» por su incidencia masiva (1988: 54).

On another side note, what could be the importance of *La inconstancia de la suerte*? It is certainly trying to overcome the Baroque drama and all its typical elements with a return to classical canons to illustrate social, political and moral issues. This *comedia* does not offer an image of society but, using Díez Borque's sentence: «un entramado social de la realidad, dando sublimados los valores en que se apoya la vida cotidiana, enmascarada según unas orientaciones precisas en esa época de política impuesta y religiosa unidad» (1988: 95). It is a simple work that may not have the greatness of Calderón's works or the strength of Metastasio's theatre, but it allows us to appreciate how the author developed the eternal struggle between the weakness of human passions and the virtue that overcomes all obstacles. *La inconstancia* covers the subject of civil morality through poetic justice that presents the incriminated character, here Croesus, as a victim of his decisions and, as deemed to be guilty, it demands he suffers the consequences (Parker, 1957). The author extracts the historical and Herodotean memory and provides these to a collective audience.

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